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Testimony of Representative Mike Demicco
Planning and Development Committee
March 14, 2014

Good Morning Representative Rojas, Senator Osten, Representative Fox, Senator Cassano and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee:

I am State Representative Mike Demicco (21st District—Farmington), and I am joined by State Senator Terry Gerrata (6th District—New Britain, Berlin, Farmington). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 332, "An Act Amending the Charter of the Metropolitan District in Hartford County."

The provisions of this bill will rectify several inequities that currently exist for the "non-member" towns within the Metropolitan District, of which Farmington is one. Specifically, the bill requires the Metropolitan District to: charge all customers at uniform rates, give non-member towns' representation on the District Board, and make budget and meeting information available to the public via the internet.

As you may know, the towns of Farmington, East Granby, Glastonbury, and South Windsor receive water supplied by the Metropolitan District, but are not "members" of the District, since sanitary sewer service is not provided by the District to these towns. Thus, these "non-member" towns are afforded no direct representation regarding the District's annual budget or the rates it charges to customers for water service.

In recent years, the District began to charge its customers in non-member towns a "general surcharge," ostensibly to recoup the cost of historic capital improvements and to provide a more reliable source of revenue to the District. (This is in addition to the "special improvement surcharge," which has increased significantly in just a couple of years.) The general surcharge has increased dramatically from 2011 to now, leading to protests from the affected customers at public meetings, e-mails and phone calls to legislators, and ultimately the bill (SB 332) before you today.

The customers of the Metropolitan District in our town (Farmington) have made it clear that they are willing to pay their fair share, in order to continue to enjoy the water provided by the District. They are, however, adamantly opposed to paying MORE THAN their fair share for this arrangement.

We would respectfully ask the Planning and Development Committee to favorably report this bill, which will guarantee representation and equitable water rates for the Metropolitan District's non-member towns.

One important final note: owing to an apparent drafting error, the town of Farmington was inadvertently left out of the provisions of this bill. We would respectfully ask the Committee to draft and approve substitute language to amend the bill, thus correcting this omission.

Thank you very much.